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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Another Perspective on Bishop Animal Shelter Kennels



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Posted Tuesday, January 13, 2026 1:07 pm

by Janine Davis

There has been a great deal of public criticism surrounding the new Bishop animal shelter facility, much of it framed as serious safety and welfare concerns. After reviewing the petitions and posts circulating online, it's clear that much of the blame being assigned is misplaced and rooted in misunderstandings about how the facility is designed to operate.

I worked at Manatee County Animal Welfare and have firsthand experience with daily shelter operations. A significant portion of the criticism assumes that dogs are routinely removed from and walked through the interior of the kennel buildings. That assumption is incorrect.

At the Palmetto shelter, dogs often have to be removed from their kennels for cleaning because the facility effectively functions as one-sided housing when over capacity. Although Palmetto was originally designed to allow dogs to be shifted for cleaning, intake pressure frequently made that unworkable in practice. Staff (and volunteers) are forced to pull dogs out, walk them past others, clean, and return them, sometimes more than 100 dogs per day.

The move to Bishop is intended to eliminate that problem. The Bishop kennels are designed as true double-compartment housing, with an interior and exterior component for each dog, allowing dogs to be shifted during cleaning without being removed. Interior spaces are staff-

only work areas, not public hallways.

Many of the loudest complaints (narrow corridors, slippery floors, noise levels, dogs passing other dogs, adopter safety, inflated time estimates, and even kennel size) only exist if you assume dogs are being moved through interior spaces or evaluated as interior-only kennels. They are not.

If a dog currently has only an interior kennel, the combined interior and exterior space at Bishop is comparable, with the added benefit that the dog can choose to be inside or outside.

It's also important to note that "dry runs" conducted by bringing personal dogs onto an unfinished site, outside of County authority and without adherence to shelter SOP's, are operationally meaningless and have no relevance to how the facility is designed or intended to function. Shelter operations are governed by written protocols, not ad-hoc demonstrations or imagined workflows.

The kennel facility may not be what everyone envisioned, but that does not mean it is nonfunctional or unsafe, as suggested. It is also not complete. Additional improvements, including shade, turf, and a future Adoptions building, are already planned and will further improve flow and capacity.

This is not to suggest the shelter or the system is without flaws. Legitimate challenges remain. And it's important to acknowledge a larger truth: you cannot outbuild an overpopulation crisis. Outcomes ultimately depend on community action such as adoption, fostering, volunteering, spay/neuter, responsible ownership, and rescue support.

Janine Davis

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